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Social injustice and environmental risks need to be tackled together – Ban



Sustainable development is about people. Photo: UNDP/Zak Mulligan

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Social justice and environmental protection are equally urgent and intrinsically linked goals, with coordinated global action needed on both fronts at an upcoming United Nations sustainable development conference, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon told a forum in Istanbul today.

“The world stands at a crossroads,” Mr. Ban said in a [message](#) to the first Global Human Development Forum, [convened](#) by the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) and the Government of Turkey.

“We need everyone – government ministers and policymakers, business and civil society leaders, and young people – to work together to transform our economies, to place our societies on a more just and equitable footing, and to protect the resources and ecosystems on which our shared future depends,” he added. The message was delivered on his behalf by UNDP Associate Administrator Rebeca Grynsan.

The Forum was organized to examine the critical social, economic and environmental challenges facing the world today, including better approaches to assessing national and global progress. It comes ahead of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, slated to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June.

More than 100 Heads of State will be attending the conference, known as Rio+20, making it one of the largest such high-level gatherings in recent times.

“Sustainable development recognizes that our economic, social and environmental objectives are not competing goals that must be traded off against each other, but are interconnected objectives that are most effectively pursued together in a holistic manner,” Mr. Ban added in his message. “We need an outcome from Rio+20 that reflect this understanding and that relates to the concerns of all.”

The Forum also provides an opportunity for a fresh look at the critical social, economic and environmental challenges now facing the world community. It has before it UNDP’s 2011 Human Development Report – “Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All” – which argued that social inequalities and environmental hazards must be tackled together for the sake of future generations.

“This Forum is particularly timely and important,” said Ms. Grynsan in her own remarks. “It provides a unique opportunity to debate the messages we want to take to Brazil, reflecting on what we have learned since the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and the Earth Summit in 1992.”

“We must recognize that high-carbon, unequal growth will undermine itself by breeding social unrest and violence, and by destroying natural habitats critical for livelihoods,” she added. “We need a new paradigm of growth and a new approach to the political economy of sustainable development.”

The two-day meeting is expected to conclude on Friday with the adoption of an “Istanbul Declaration,” articulating agreed goals and priorities for the Rio+20 conference.

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